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Soviets don't honor SALT, but U.S. will

Russians spotted building up to 20 new ICBM bases

By Bill Gertz
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U.S. intelligence has detected construction of up to 20 new SSX-25 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) bases throughout the Soviet Union, according to a CIA estimate circulating in intelligence circles.

In its latest public report on Soviet military power, issued just two months ago, the Defense Depart-

ment said that only two SSX-25 bases are under construction.

An administration source, who requested anonymity, said the intelligence report describes the new bases as groups of garages with sliding roofs surrounded by other buildings. Each base contains up to nine SSX-25 garages indicating a planned deployment of up to 180 missiles.

The large number of new bases for the single warhead SS-25 indicates the Soviets are moving ahead more rapidly in deploying the new mobile missile than Defense Department planners previously had anticipated, the source said.

A CIA spokesman could not confirm any findings of the report, but White House spokesman Robert Sims said the administration is carefully reviewing the estimate in preparation for portions of it to be released.

Mr. Sims could not provide details on the estimate but said information in the report was "impressive" and contained data on Soviet military programs "that the public should have."

A declassified version of the national intelligence estimate will be released in the near future, Mr. Sims said.

"These things have to be done so carefully," Mr. Sims said of the declassification process. "Parts of it

may leak out, but we'll be careful about our review."

The Reagan administration has charged that the mobile SSX-25 missile violates a 1979 SALT II treaty prohibition against building a second new type of ICBM. President Reagan is expected to announce today his decision on continued U.S. compliance with the treaty that was signed but never ratified by the United States.

The Soviets have dismissed the administration charge by arguing that the SSX-25 is a modified version of the SS-13, an ICBM already deployed when the SALT treaty was agreed upon, and is therefore not a new missile. They say the United States underestimated the payload capacity of the SS-13, which the administration believes carries only half the throw weight of the SSX-25.

The Pentagon's latest report on the Soviet defense posture, "Soviet Military Power," describes the SSX-25 as "nearing deployment." The report says the two believed under construction are described as "launcher garages equipped with sliding roofs and several support buildings to house the necessary mobile support equipment."

The exact locations of the new bases have not yet been made public, but other published reports have revealed that the two suspected SSX-25 sites identified by the Pentagon are located at the Yoskar Ola and Yurya Missile Complexes in Central Siberia.

In an effort to bring public attention to the CIA report, three U.S. senators sent President Reagan a letter last Thursday requesting that the findings of the estimate be made available to the public as soon as possible.

The letter, signed by Sens. Jesse

Helms, R.-N.C., James McClure, R.-Idaho, and John East, R.-N.C., states that the CIA recently briefed the White House on the findings of the estimate.

Quentin Crommelin, co-author of the recent book "Soviet Military Supremacy," said that SSX-25s, while mobile, require base facilities for maintenance and deployment and that it was possible the Soviets are building the bases for this purpose.

The Soviets have deployed more than 400 mobile SS-20s, two-thirds of which are targeted against Western Europe, the Pentagon has said. The Defense Department has detected "some shifting" of SS-20s "as the Soviets prepare for the deployment of the SSX-25," the Defense Department publication stated.

"That's one indication that the SS-20 should be considered an intercontinental missile," Mr. Crommelin said in an interview.

The SSX-25 is a solid propellant ICBM mounted on a truck-like vehicle. Its range is 8,750 miles and it is capable of moving quickly on roads to avoid attack or detection.

The only U.S. counterpart to the SSX-25 is the small, single-warhead ICBM called the Midgetman that presently is a research project.